ABSTRACT

An electronic media distribution system which facilitates the distribution of media to consumers over a network, such as the Internet, while achieving commercial business objectives and protecting the intellectual property rights associated with the media being distributed. One such media distributed by the system is musical content. The system provides the infrastructure and support for various market participants to engage in buying, selling, finding and distributing music. Content owners, distributors, retailers and consumers are all market participants. The system provides an interface for consumers to locate, access and receive musical content over the Internet. The system facilitates continued control over the musical content sent to consumers by dynamically enforcing retailer agreements and restrictions governing the purchase, use, and distribution of the content. The system also provides a service to retailers and distributors in assisting with the management of sales and distribution of music over the Internet. Specifically, the system provides a designated module for certifying and distributing retail offers for the musical content where the offers are dynamically updated by electronic contracts between the retailers and distributors of the music. To do this the system maintains the content in secure or tamper resistant format independent and separate from offers which are also in secure or tamper resistant format. The system performs the following tasks: managing the musical content; providing a system for consumers to find the content and associated commercial offers; delivering the content and enforcing the terms of the offers; and tracking usage and settling financial transactions related to the purchase, use or distribution of the content. The system architecture includes eight modules: Production System, Retail Web Site, Consumer Player, Reference Service, Delivery Service, Content Catalog, Registration Manager, and Financial Clearinghouse. Each of the modules performs a specific set of related functions while communicating with other modules through specified standard interfaces.

The communication interfaces provide a great deal of flexibility in the implementation details of the individual modules. The modules are defined such that multiple or different implementations of each of the modules can be supported within the standard interfaces.